



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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U. S. TO ASSIST MUSSEL SHELL PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

Federal aid for the fresh-water mussel-shell products industry, which has declined 60 percent in the last decade, is promised by a \$17,000 fund recently made available, the Fish and Wildlife Service today reported to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes.

Begun in this country in 1892, the industry by the turn of the century, included more than 50 factories in the Mississippi Basin and Great Lakes Drainage areas, turning out about 30 million gross of buttons alone, annually, with a value of "many millions of dollars." For contrast, the latest survey (1939) shows an industry reduced to 19 plants in 5 states (14 of them in Iowa), producing only 10 million gross of pearl buttons--and all these, plus all other mussel-shell products, valued at less than \$2,500,000.

Salient features of the proposed assistance include survey of brood-mussel supply, collection of brood stock, artificial propagation of mussels, and their later distribution on suitable fresh-water bottoms. Details of the whole program are being formulated by the Service's Division of Fishery Biology, with the practical phases of the work scheduled to get under way about April 1, the beginning of the reproductive season for mussels.